



Department of Health

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DAL: DNH 25-12
Subject: Hand Hygiene as an Effective
Infection Prevention and Control
Practice

Dear Administrators and Infection Preventionists:

Effective infection prevention and control practices result in better care by lowering infection rates and lowering healthcare costs. One of the best methods for preventing the spread of illness is effective hand hygiene. Effective hand hygiene includes hand sanitizing with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol or hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds. Frequent hand hygiene either using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water are crucial for preventing the spread of the fungal infection, *Candida auris*. Although hand sanitizing is the preferred method of hand hygiene in healthcare settings, it is not as effective as hand washing in preventing the spread of *Clostridioides difficile* ("C. diff.") and norovirus. Hand washing should be performed during the care of persons with suspected or confirmed infection during outbreaks of *Clostridioides difficile* ("C. diff") and norovirus. In addition, hand washing should be performed when hands are visibly soiled, before eating, and after using the restroom. Hand washing facilities should be readily available for staff to wash hands with soap and water.

Hand hygiene meets the expectation of those we serve. The public knows that using effective hand hygiene prevents the spread of harmful diseases and should expect every health care professional perform appropriate hand hygiene before and after touching a patient. It is appropriate for a patient to remind a health care provider to perform hand hygiene if necessary. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created thorough guidance that details infection prevention and control strategies, including hand hygiene, to contain and prevent the spread of communicable diseases in health care facilities.

In New York State, hand hygiene surveillance focuses on monitoring compliance with best practices to prevent the spread of infections. This includes direct observation of healthcare workers' hand hygiene practices and data collection from hand hygiene product usage.

All Administrators and Infection Preventionists must:

- Immediately ensure that effective hand hygiene is practiced wherever healthcare is delivered, by every health care provider, before and after they touch a patient.
- Review the CDC guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/hcp/clinical-safety/index.html> to evaluate additional infection prevention and control practices that can prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- Encourage the use of these strategies amongst staff.

For questions, please contact the Division of Nursing Home and ICF/IID Surveillance by email at nhinfo@health.ny.gov.

Sincerely,

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